श्री रवि शंकर प्रसाद:*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record. कोई रिकार्ड नहीं हो रहा है, केवल क्वैश्चन रिकार्ड होगा। ...(व्यवधान)... बैठ जाइए। मुझे आप सहयोग दे रहे हैं, इसके लिए मैं आपको बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद दे रहा हूं। ...(व्यवधान)... बैठ जाइए। ...(व्यवधान).-- I can tell you that anything spoken without my permission will not go on record. ...*(Interruptions)*... Nothing will go on record. ...*(Interruptions)*... Nothing will go on record. बैठ जाइए। क्वैश्चन नंबर 281 ...(व्यवधान)... Q.No. 281. Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy: Q. No. 281...*(Interruptions)*...

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Procurement of foodgrains for exports

*281. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:††

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the grandiose proposal of Government to allow direct procurement of foodgrains from the market for exports has not found favour;

(b) whether this proposal was to go into operation from April 1, 2004;

(c) if so, to what extent this proposal has been considered afresh; and

(d) by when, a final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (d) A new foodgrain export policy is being formulated. It is at an advanced stage of consideration in the Government of India. The details and incentives under the scheme are also being considered.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister what was the quantum of exports in respect of wheat and rice to various countries in the last three years.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, the export of wheat in the year 2000-01 was 8.1 lakh tonnes. In 2001-02, it was 26.49 million tonnes. In 2002-03, it was 36.71 million tonnes, and the provisional figure for 2003-04 is 40.23 lakh tonnes. Sir, so far as rice is concerned, in the year 2001, it was 6.82 lakh

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* Not recorded

†† The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy

tonnes. In the year 2001-02, it was 15.41 lakh tonnes. In 2002-03, it was 42.59 lakh tonnes, and in the year 2003-04, it was 26.01 lakh tonnes. Sir, the last figure is a provisional figure.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, I would like to know what is going to be the policy of the Government of India on this sensitive issue that our stocks in the country should not be exported in such a way that there may be shortage for our local market. I want to know what is going to be the policy; how the Ministry is going to be successful in boosting exports and also in seeing that the domestic market is not affected.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir the totality of the picture has to be taken into account. There was an inter-Ministerial Committee. The inter-Ministerial Committee has made recommendations as recent as July, 2004, and these recommendations, obviously from the inter-Ministerial Committee, interfere with the Department of Food & Consumer Affairs and with the Department of Agriculture. All these inputs will be taken together in the exercise and then eventually a decision will be taken by the Cabinet.

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, I fully appreciate that the policies are under consideration. My question is very short and simple. Recently, there have been a lot of starvation deaths in various States, whether it is Amlasol in West Bengal or in Maharashtra or in Madhya Pradesh itself. My question is this. When you formulate a new policy, would you ensure that export of foodgrains is not done at the cost of our own citizens and that there are no starvation deaths?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, rice and wheat are two commodities in which we have surplus production. The FCI is holding stocks. Obviously, I think it is a matter of utmost importance and that the Government will not take any steps which, in any way, jeopardise even the stocks which we have in reserve, forget about starvation deaths. That is why there is an inter-Ministerial Committee. All the Departments of Government of India will look into it, they will look at the stocks, they will look at the possible future production, etc. Now, we are looking at what the monsoon is going to be, what the monsoon has been and what the stocks will be. Only then a decision will be taken. This will be a very careful decision because export of foodgrains is a very sensitive matter. On the other hand, there is the question of stockpiling. We have to ensure that stockpiling is not done; otherwise, Government's outlays on subsidies will only tend to increase. So, there is a balance between these two and this balance will be met.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, I think the hon. Minister is misinformed on the question of surplus production of rice and wheat. The production of rice and wheat in India is not in surplus. If you look at the last five years' *per capita* availability of rice and wheat, it has been constantly coming down. What is the surplus? Our godowns are overfilled because there has been an erosion in the purchasing power of the people. Therefore, I think it will be too simplistic and missing the essential points. Out of the last five years, for three years the growth of agriculture and food production has been negative. Therefore, if we state that there is production surplus, I think, there is a problem. The problem is in the delivery mechanism of the foodgrains, that is, through the PDS and other means. Therefore, I think, there has to be a correction in the perception of the present Government compared to the earlier Government. If the food production is not in surplus, the point of food security has to be taken into consideration while formulating the new foodgrains export policy.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, this is a question of framing it. If the hon. Member is saying that consumption is less and consumption has to be increased, then, obviously, that quantity of crop will be reduced, if you take the difference. We have, today, got 30 million tonnes of stocks in the FCI. We have 30 million tonnes.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: That is because people are not in a position to purchase.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: They have to buy. If the hon. Member's question is that the people don't have the purchasing power when they want to buy it, then there is another form of calculating it. It is another way; it has to be simulated. He is talking about simulated surplus.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: There is no surplus production.That is my point.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: The question is: How do you frame the question of surplus? We have one view. There are various methods of calculating the surplus. *(Interruptions)*....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Next question.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: We have taken into consideration the difference between the consumption patterns, the consumption that is being there. Then my answer has also relevance to that.